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ABSTRACT

This issue of the "Illinois English Bulletin" is devoted to developing critical awareness, through poetry, values, the elements of fiction, and literary study. The first section considers approaching narrative through the use of popular materials and includes two essays: "Grim Tales in the English Classroom" by Larry Danielson and "From the Comics to the Classics" by Galen R. Boehme. The second section explores varying the approach with the level and contains two articles: "Overcoming Student Antipathy to Poetry" by Kitty Locker and "Student Resistance to Poetry: A Theory" by Meg Files. The third section, on approaching a novel through polemics, consists of an article by James Obertino, "Teaching 'Brave New World.'" The last article, "Not for Entertainment Only" by Donald A. Offermann, considers approaching teaching with conviction. (LL)

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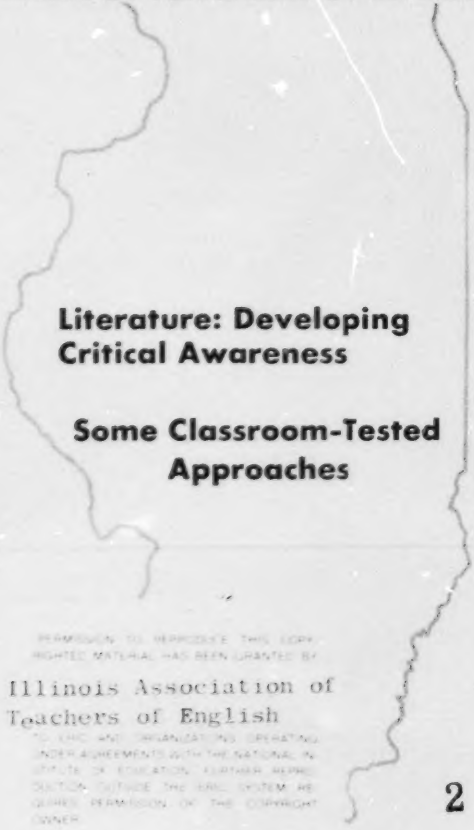

Literature: Developing Critical Awareness

Some Classroom-Tested Approaches

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A Call for Manuscripts

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READING & THE ENGLISH TEACHER	August 31, 1977
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COMPOSITION (No deadline)	

Take the opportunity to share your successful assignments, workable units, innovative methods! The *Bulletin* will serve you better if it can be a medium for sharing your best ideas and experiences. Keep your manuscripts practical and fairly short (4-8 typewritten pages), and submit in duplicate.

DOROTHY MATTHEWS
Editor

ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN
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Grim Tales in the English Classroom

Larry Danielson
Department of English, University of Illinois
at Urbana-Champaign

In the fall issue of this journal I suggested several conventional uses of folk literature in the English classroom, for example, in the introduction of poetry and short-story units and in the discussion of metaphor, simile, literature-culture relations, and diverse treatments of character and plot development.[1] Each possibility, however, was described quite generally. The following pages delineate more explicitly the uses that a particular kind of folk narrative, at present very popular in youth culture, might serve in the secondary school literature class.

Legend as defined by most folklorists is a traditional narrative that purportedly relates an actual occurrence or deals with the story content in a believable fashion. The legend is placed in a realistic world that is familiar to us, often replete with specific place-names and "real" people, but its basic plot appears in many versions widely scattered over a geographic area, even though the narrative usually begins with a validating citation of the trustworthy source from whom it was heard.[2] Legend events are located in an everyday reality and are described in a conversational, informal manner rather than in the high stylization that characterizes the joke or *Märchen* (magic tale). Instead of "Have you heard the one about . . ." or "Once upon a time," we are alerted to the special kind of folk narrative that is the legend by such words as, "I heard the strangest story about my neighbor's cousin the other day." Immediately, skeptical though we may be, we are prepared to listen to the story without formalized entry into a fantasy world. It takes place in our own reality. We may or may not believe the narrative, but we do not willingly suspend our dis-

[1] This is the second part of Professor Danielson's two-part essay on the uses of folk literature in the English classroom. Part One appeared in the Fall 1976 issue of this journal.

belief when we hear the story, as we must for a magic tale, in order to become involved in the events. Instead, we believe, we suspect, we scoff, or take a position somewhere between these alternatives, but we bring to bear on the story content belief criteria that we use in our day-to-day lives.[3]

The supernatural legend involves extra-human agents, for instance, ghosts or, in religious legend, such figures as saints. A secular supernatural legend often collected in the past several decades is that of the ghostly hitchhiker. In its core form, a traveler picks up a hitchhiker, who sometimes communicates prophetic information to the driver, sometimes not. The story concludes with the sudden and unexplained disappearance of the hitchhiker from the car. In many versions the ghostly nature of the fellow-traveler is later confirmed by surprising evidence.[4]

In contrast, the urban legend does not deal with the supernatural, but describes the grotesque, which, though shocking, is within the range of actual possibility in the natural world. The story of the threatened baby-sitter, for example, is often related as an historical occurrence in adolescent circles:

> This is a story about a baby-sitter and a terrifying experience that she had. There was a young girl about high school age who went to baby-sit one evening. She arrived at the house early in the evening so that she had to cook dinner for the children, play with them a little bit, and then later on, about 7:30, she put them to bed. So she went downstairs and was just sitting around reading and watching television and the telephone rang. And she went to answer it and there was this male voice on the other end saying, "At 10:30 I'm going to kill the children and then I'm going to come after you." And the girl thought it was a crank call and she was a little scared but she just put it off as a joke that someone was playing on her and she hung up. About half an hour later the phone rang again. And the same male voice said, "At 10:30 I'm going to come in and I'm going to kill the children and then I'm coming after you."
>
> At this point the girl was getting a little more scared because she thought the man might be, you know, a maniac and might actually come and do something. But she decided that she would still go on and just sit around and wait. And she thought about going upstairs and looking in on the children because she hadn't been up there for awhile but she decided against it, just . . . she didn't think anything was wrong. And the third time, about half an hour later, the telephone rang. And this male voice said, "It's getting closer to the time and I'm going to come after the children and I'm going to get you too."
>
> And at this point the girl got very upset and she decided that she would call the police. And she called the operator and told her the story of what had happened and the operator said, "All right, you know, we'll take care of it if he calls back again just keep him on the line and we'll put a tracer on it."
>
> And the girl sat around; she was very nervous but decided that it was the best thing that she could do. Pretty soon the phone rang

again. She ran to answer it. And it was the man. She tried to talk to him a little bit more and tried to get some information out of him but all that he would say was, "I'm going to come in at 10:30 and I'm going to kill the children and then I'm coming after you." And the girl hung up the phone and was just terrified but could do nothing but just sit and wait. And the phone rang again. And she answered it and the operator was on the other end and she said, "Get out of the house immediately; don't go upstairs; don't do anything; just you leave the house. When you get out there, there will be policemen outside and they'll take care of it."

The girl was just really petrified and she thought she should check the children or something but decided that if the operator told her to get out she should get out. So she went outside and when she got out there she was talking to the policemen and they told her that when they traced the call it was made on the extension from the upstairs line and that the whole time the man was talking to her he had been in the house and that he had already murdered both the children who were found torn to bits in the bedroom. Had she waited any longer she would have gotten it too.[3]

The story of the shoplifted parcel containing, unknown to the thief, the body of a deceased pet is usually narrated with convincing details of person and place, as in the following gossip column item from the *Chicago Daily News:*

Another Chicago tale. A tearful lady bought a floral piece from Al Pala at Michael Lavin Flowers, 407 W. Washington. She had her late poodle in a shopping bag and was busing toward a pet cemetery west of Chicago. Hours later, the woman phoned. Her shopping bag, complete with dog and wreath, had been snatched as she left the bus. Really, Al? "Really." Doggone.[4]

The urban legend is very much in tune with contemporary interests, and over the past few years stories about outlandish microwave oven incidents, surprising (and nauseating) contents discovered in fast-food purchases, and drug experiences with horrible consequences have appeared in oral tradition. It is clear that many of these stories are not for the queasy. They often involve the unnerving, the bizarre, death, or bodily mutilation. If such subject matter gives a teacher pause, however, we may ask how many American literature textbooks include "The Telltale Heart," "The Pit and the Pendulum," and "The Cask of Amontillado," all sharing the imprimatur of decades of classroom use.

The urban legend appears to be especially meaningful in adolescent culture. In fact, most of the texts now published have been collected from high school and college students. If, then, these narratives are significant to young adults as a special type of literature, they can be scrutinized with little student resistance in the same way that a Poe short story can be studied. Because these oral narratives are short, non-reflective, and relatively simple in

construction, we can easily raise questions about structure, style, diction, and tone in their discussion. As important, we can confront important questions about the meaning and function of literature. These narratives are told and re-created by the group undertaking their study, and therefore the analysis of the texts becomes more than a literary analysis of works far removed in time and space. Instead, the teacher and student are studying their own informal literature, albeit an oral one. If we begin to consider the stories that we share with one another as a meaningful kind of literature, an oral art form, and pay attention to their structural, stylistic, and psychological components, it may be easier to move on from the folkloric texts to study the same questions in belletristic narrative.

Urban legend texts transcribed from oral tradition may be found in such journals as *Indiana Folklore*, which often publishes a variety of such narratives.[7] It would be even more satisfying, however, if several versions of the same narrative could be collected by the students themselves and careful transcriptions of the tape-recorded materials used for the in-class literary analysis.

The "Runaway Grandmother" story is a good example of an urban legend that circulates vigorously in contemporary oral tradition. The following three versions[8] were collected in the 1960's and attest to the vigor of the genre:

A

Well, I heard this true story from my neighbor. I don't remember which neighbor, but I believe it was my neighbor called Mary Randolf. Mary called up one day and was almost in a state of shock. She told Mama this story and Mama didn't believe it. Later Mary came over to our house and repeated the story to me.

It happened to her friend's family (I don't know their name) as they were traveling across the desert to California. Within this station wagon there was a father, a mother and their children, and the mother-in-law who everyone called "Grandma." And as they were going across the desert Grandma became sick and she died. Now they didn't want to alarm the children and they didn't want to leave Grandma out in the desert so the only place they had room for her where she—her smell wouldn't bother the children—was to strap her on top of the station wagon along with the baggage with a tarp over her, of course. And as they were traveling across the desert they kept looking for a town where they could deposit Grandma. They finally arrived in a small town in Arizona where they stopped at a filling station and they went in to report Grandma's death. And while they were within the filling station somebody stole the station wagon and when they went out—no station wagon and no Grandma! Well, it wasn't very funny even though it sounds like it because they have to wait seven years now to prove that Grandma is dead before they

can collect any insurance. And they've never been able to find either the car or Grandma. This actually happened.

They couldn't leave Grandma out in the desert. Not only because — uh — it wasn't right to leave a body out in the desert but also for insurance and also to prove it wasn't murder and also to prove there was a body in any court proceedings.

Told by Karen Rae Danko, 22, Gary, Collected by Gerri Bard.

B

I first heard this story in Columbus, Indiana, in the fall of 1963. It was supposed to have happened to the brother of a local doctor and his family — the "grandmother" being his mother-in-law. The family, consisting of the brother and his wife, their children, and, of course, the grandmother, took a vacation to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Loaded down with camping gear and all the necessary baggage, the family made its way to an isolated area and proceeded to set up a campsite. On the second night, maybe from unfamiliar physical activity, the grandmother had a heart attack and died.

Miles away from civilization, the grief stricken family had to get the body to an undertaker. It was inconceivable that the body ride in the back of the station wagon with the children, who had been very close to their grandmother, so, placed in a sleeping bag, it was strapped to the luggage carrier on top.

After riding many hours, they finally came to a town large enough to have a mortuary. No member of the nearly hysterical family wanted to remain with the car and they all went in, leaving the car and corpse unattended. When they finally emerged, they found to their horror that the car and all its contents had been stolen. The stripped car was found a few weeks later without the corpse and at the time I heard the story it was still missing.

Told by Carolyn Hinkle, Indianapolis, 1966.

C

Well, once there was this family and they had been waiting to go abroad for, oh, a number of years, and finally their big chance came. They packed up all of their things — had their car shipped over — and were soon in Europe and ready to go sightseeing. There were five of them and they had a rather small car and it was pretty crowded. There were the two parents and two children and a grandmother.

Well, a trip to Europe can be quite a strain on an old woman. And she hadn't been in too good of health anyway, and that was one of the reasons they took the trip, so she could see all of the "European Wonders" before she died.

Anyway, one day when they woke up they found that the grandmother had died during the night. Well, they didn't know what to do because here they were, 3,000 miles away from home and across an ocean yet, and they were the grandmother's only living relatives so they couldn't just send a body back to the States with no one to receive it. They were going to be starting home soon, anyway, so out of desperation they wrapped the grandmother's body in a piece of can-

vas and tied it to the top of their small car — which, by the way, made much more room inside the car.

And as they were making their last round across the village where they were staying they decided to stop and eat their last European meal at a small, quaint restaurant.

Well, it happened that while they were in there someone stole the car with the grandmother on top. For some reason they weren't too worried about the whole situation, they just wondered what the looks on the crooks' face would be when they discovered the strange contents of the canvas.

Told by Gloria Scheuerer, 21, of Fort Wayne, majoring in elementary education at Indiana University, Bloomington. She heard it from her mother as a true event. Collected by Cindy Nelson, 1966.

The story has diffused rapidly throughout the western world within the past two decades and is easily collected in both North America and Europe. Newspapers have published it as fact, and it has provided the basis for an Alfred Hitchcock television drama and two prose literary versions in Europe.[9]

The first literary question to be asked concerns the basic structure of the story. How is the narrative organized and developed? What event sequence shapes its subject matter? After an optional introduction, which often includes "evidence" validating the truth of the story (e.g., names, places, dates, reliability of sources, as in texts A and B), the following structural components are shared by all three versions: 1) family pleasure trip in a remote or alien territory; 2) death of passenger; 3) problem of dealing with the corpse satisfactorily; 4) temporary solution to the problem; 5) final and apparently successful resolution of the problem nearly achieved; 6) inadvertent theft of the corpse, often causing additional problems and/or anxieties.[10]

Central to the narrative, of course, is the problem of transporting the corpse, dealing with it effectively until those whose job it is can assume that special responsibility. The difficulty comprises the lengthiest and most detailed segment of the story.[11] It covers about half the length of the full narrative in all three texts and it is central to each variation on the theme.

The structural organization of the story implements a series of ironic contrasts: the preliminary situation, a family vacation, shifts suddenly from pleasant idyll to nightmare; a family member beloved and respected according to our public western value system must be treated like a piece of camping equipment; and, most dramatically, a satisfactory resolution of the crisis appears to be at hand, but another reversal occurs that is impossible to resolve. As a result, haunting questions remain unanswered. Did the grandma ever receive proper burial? How is the family to explain

this bizarre experience to friends and relatives at home? How does one argue one's innocence to the authorities? What was the thief's response to the surprising baggage?

The structural sequence at its most abstract can be described as 1) problem; 2) solution — difficult, but apparently successful; 3) dramatic reversal, the first solution causing yet another problem that cannot be solved. This pattern is typical of many suspenseful narratives about danger, death, and the grotesque, and most of us as readers and listeners find it a perversely thrilling structural sequence.[12] We are satisfied with the problem's solution, lulled into relative complacency, and then shocked again with the sudden reversal, the dramatic turn-about that raises unanswered questions to brood upon.

The three texts, though sharing the same basic structure and subject matter, are dissimilar in style. The narrators tell their stories quite differently from one another. Version B, for example, is a compact narrative, rather tightly constructed, and not as informally told as versions A and C. Its diction is specific, almost self-conscious. Adverbial and adjectival phrases describe details that in versions A and C are expressed in independent and dependent clauses. Although version B is the shortest narrative of the three, it is most heavily loaded with specific descriptions of behavior and emotional states. Contrast, for instance, the narrators' treatment of the death in the three texts. In version A the description is brief and to the point: "And as they were going across the desert Grandma became sick and she died." In version C the depiction is prolix, but informative, even though it is not specific about the time and cause of death: "Well, a trip to Europe can be quite a strain on an old woman. And she hadn't been in too good of health, anyway, and that was one of the reasons they took the trip, so she could see all of the 'European Wonders' before she died." A single pithy sentence in version B is the most specific of the three: "On the second night, maybe from unfamiliar physical activity, the grandmother had a heart attack and died." Version B, then, gives us detailed information about the death, A handles the event quickly and generally, and C provides a vague, but comparatively lengthy preparation for the event. Note, too, that text C is more colloquial in style than B, using such phrases as "in too good of health," filler words like "well" and "anyway," and, as in version A, chains of independent clauses.

The description of the final difficulty also provides significant stylistic contrasts. Again, version B is quite self-conscious in diction: "When they finally emerged, they found to their horror that the car and all its contents had been stolen." The narrator has the

family "emerge." She notes their "horror," rather than let us imagine the family's initial response as in texts A and C, respectively: "And while they were within the filling station somebody stole the station wagon and then they went out — no station wagon and no Grandma!" and "Well, it happened that while they were in there someone stole the car with the grandmother on top." Artfully, narrator A does not prepare us for the theft, but allows us to share the sudden astonishment with the horrified family. In contrast, version A makes us privy to the theft while the unsuspecting family is in the filling station and C dispatches the theft ludicrously rather than dramatically: "... someone stole the car with the grandmother on top." Text B, in fact, is so tightly constructed and refined in style that we might suspect that the narrative has been carefully considered and self-consciously written out rather than transcribed from an informal oral performance.

Tone is sometimes a difficult topic to introduce in the literature class, but attitude of the artist toward the subject matter and the expression of creative stance can be easily examined in the three texts in question. The versions diverge appreciably in their articulation of attitude and emotional tenor.

Version A contains little expression of familial grief or horror. A kind of hard-nosed practicality toward the problem characterizes the family's concerns and behavior. The corpse is placed on top of the station wagon because "they didn't want to alarm the children and they didn't want to leave Grandma out in the desert," and because "her smell would bother the children." The narrator goes on to emphasize the difficulties that the corpse causes the family: not only have they lost a family member, but the insurance cannot be collected for seven years. The last sentences in version A defend at length the family's decision to carry the body back to civilization, but the rationale does not emphasize overpowering moral or emotional commitment. "It wasn't right" to "leave Grandma out in the desert," but, as significant, the insurance problem was a consideration, as well as a possible murder charge.

Text B carefully creates the tone we may feel is more appropriate to the subject matter. The family is "grief stricken" at the death, worried about getting the body to the undertaker for proper (and respectful?) treatment, and anxious about possible psychological damage to the children "who had been very close to their grandmother." Not surprisingly, by the end of the trip the family is "nearly hysterical," and, finally, "horrified" by the theft. This group is not the practical, tough-minded unit we find in version A, nor the rather happy-go-lucky family of version C.

The last text comes close to comic narrative, and it is jaunty and up-beat. Rather than leave for the United States immediately, the family, it is implied, continues the last of the vacation with "much more room inside the car." (Every cloud has a silver lining.) When the theft is discovered after a delightful meal stop, the family members are not "too worried about the whole situation," but instead muse with wry humor on the thief's response to the unusual cargo. It is interesting that this version contains no introductory validation as do texts A and B, and no specific information about the narrator's relation to the family, however remote. The lack of such data and the tone of the story indicate that quite a different attitude towards the events and their relation to historical occurrence is involved. Text C is more closely related in form and rhetoric to comic narrative than to the localized urban legend. Its surface texture contrasts distinctly with versions A and B. In each text the details chosen for inclusion and emphasis, the asides, and the diction neatly coalesce to create three different tonalities, even though all three narratives share a common structure and content.

More interesting, in my opinion, than the structural and stylistic elements in these texts is the question of meaning and function in such literature. What can we suggest about the relationship of these stories to the human experience? What does the story "mean" to its narrators and their audiences? For what reasons, conscious and unconscious, is it told and re-told? In addition to the narrative's entertainment powers, its grotesque and ludicrous images, and its deft irony, we can consider its significance on less conscious levels of response.

Linda Dégh has suggested that in the runaway grandmother legend there survives the remnant of ancient fears about the returning dead and their dangerous powers.[13] A very old and widespread complex of belief, ritual, and narrative allowed humankind to find means to control the jealous and/or maligned dead from molesting the living. In our texts the dead person is rudely treated, and we never learn whether the corpse has been properly buried. Considering the criminal circumstances, we tend to doubt it. Therefore, perhaps, there lingers in the tale the threat of the dead's return to punish the living who are guilty of offenses against it. Though not explicit, that danger may be inferred, a remnant from past ages in which the supernatural was dreadfully afoot in the world.

Another interpretation of the story's significance links it directly to contemporary American society and its concerns. Many

folklorists agree that much of the meaning of folklore is unconscious, providing a socially sanctioned outlet for the expression of that which cannot be articulated by more usual means, an acceptable public ventilation of hidden anxieties. Can we consider, for example, the possibility of psychological projection at work in the telling of these stories, that is, the attribution to another person what is actually felt within oneself, sentiments that are painful to recognize and proscribed by our society? Alan Dundes suggests that the runaway grandmother legend reflects American attitudes toward the elderly grandparent and toward death:

> . . . grandmothers are *de trop* and their unwelcome presence transforms family pleasure into nightmare. If this is an accurate depiction of general American family attitudes toward grandmothers (though not on the part of grandchildren), then the nature of the wish is obvious: grandmother should take a trip from which she doesn't return. This is precisely what happens in the legend. The psychological purpose of the legend is thus to get rid of grandmother.
>
> . . . .
>
> Thus the whole wish in the legend might be expressed: (1) grandmother should die; (2) someone should steal the body so we do not have the bother, expense, and sadness of burying it; and (3) we should get all of grandmother's money. Unfortunately, wish part 2 tends to rule out or at least delay wish part 3.[14]

In our texts we note that version A expresses specific aggravation about the seven-year delay in collecting the life insurance and that version C emphasizes the crowded condition of the car with grandmother present and its roominess after her death. In all three texts the elderly person dies. Not only is she "out of the way" literally, but her body is treated outrageously, and, because of the timely theft, the family is spared the problem of body disposal. (The pointed remarks in versions A and B about grandmother's kinship status as mother-in-law are also suggestive.) In all three variants the elderly family member causes problems and ruins a vacation, but is eventually removed from the scene, first as a living entity and finally as a bodily presence.

Such a psychological interpretation may at first seem farfetched, and more substantial data concerning American attitudes toward the familial grandmother are needed to strengthen Dundes' argument. A related interpretation can be more fully defended. Is it possible that the grandmother figure in the story represents the aged about whom younger Americans have such ambivalent feelings? Similarly, does the grandmother's awkward death relate to our own personal anxieties about death — its process, painful to consider, contradictions between expected behavior and private

sentiment in its presence, and, ultimately, the reality of our own demise? Perhaps the grandmother figure efficiently and effectively allows us to rebuke the elderly for living and, simultaneously, to confront our own fears about dying.

An examination of contemporary American attitudes toward the aging, the dying, and death strengthens the argument. Open confrontations with the realities of aging and dying in our society are avoided. We have shielded ourselves and our children from death's presence and have created isolated communities for the elderly so that we may visit them at our own volition, but not be forced to deal with them daily. We have worked out elaborate means to protect ourselves from facing the personal difficulties and discomforts that ensue when a family member grows old and when death, at any age, occurs. The aging and the dying have become an insult or a bother that we would rather be left without. They drastically remind us of the finiteness of human life and of the eventual conclusion of our own.

Over the past few years, of course, psychologists have become aware of these anxieties and their problematic lack of full expression. Today we see extraordinary public attention to these topics, formerly tabooed, in the mass media and educational systems. Workshops, television programs, magazine articles, and best-sellers point out our anxious avoidance of aging and the final realities and try to teach us to deal with them openly and honestly.[15] We must struggle and, in effect, be taught like school children to accept the natural realities of aging and dying. Until we can do so, however, formal art forms in the cultivated arts and in the folk arts — as in the humble urban legend — allow us to confront these anxieties more comfortably. Such artistic expressions let us deal with our covert fears and hostilities in a circumspect manner, controlling them and keeping them safely at a distance. Through them we can project our own tensions and allow their expression through characters and actions in a story about other people — crazy people, silly people — but, ostensibly, not about ourselves.

The urban legend as a folklore genre in all its violent forms — stories about assault, mutilation, and death — is perhaps especially meaningful to adolescents for whom these realities are particularly upsetting. Young people may be sensitized to these fears because of the dramatic physiological and psychological changes they are experiencing. However, narratives like "The Runaway Grandmother" have a broader appeal, touching many of us far beyond

adolescence. The story speaks to those of us still victimized by private nightmares about human finalities and guilts about animosities toward the old and dying. We are unable to find satisfying ways of confronting these mysteries, kept silent and secret in our society until recently. Through such tales we are given some sense of control over these tensions and a means of expressing them safely and publicly, without incrimination.

The urban legend is but one kind of folk narrative that can be used in English classroom discussions. Some teachers (and students) may respond more enthusiastically to oral literature that is less morose. If so, the same questions can be pursued using traditional magic tale versions, local historical legends, or ballad variants. I have emphasized the uses of the urban legend because of its currency and popular appeal. The texts are easy for students to collect in oral tradition and transcribe for class purposes. When we begin analyzing structure, style, tone, and meaning in the oral performances of those we know personally — our classmates and ourselves — forbidding literary terms lose some of their austerity. The texts are short and at first glance slight, but they yield valuable experiences in literary analysis and the interpretation of meaning. As important, like any verbal art, whether that of Hawthorne, Poe, or a second-hour junior in American literature, the stories dramatize for us the relationship between literature and life. Ultimately, that's what our teaching is all about.

NOTES

[1] Larry Danielson, "The Uses of Folk Literature in the English Classroom," *Illinois English Bulletin*, 64:1 (Oct.-Nov., 1976), 2-14.

[2] See, for example, a description of my own experience with the popular urban legend, "The Assailant in the Back Seat," Danielson, pp. 2-3.

[3] Useful discussions of the legend genre appear in Linda Dégh, "Folk Narrative," in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1972), pp. 72-77, and "The 'Belief Legend' in Modern Society: Form, Function, and Relationship to Other Genres," in *American Folk Legend: A Symposium*, ed. Wayland D. Hand (Berkeley: University of California, 1971), pp. 55-68, and in Robert A. Georges, "The General Concept of Legend: Some Assumptions to be Reexamined and Reassessed," in *American Folk Legend*, pp. 1-19.

[4] Discussions of this fascinating legend appear with some regularity. See, for example, Richard K. Beardsley and Rosalie Hankey, "The Vanishing Hitchhiker," *California Folklore Quarterly*, 1 (1942), 303-335, and "A History of the Vanishing Hitchhiker," *California Folklore Quarterly*, 2 (1943), 13-25; Louis C. Jones, "Hitchhiking Ghosts in New York," *California Folklore Quarterly*, 3 (1944), 282-292, and Chap. 6, "The Ghostly Hitchhiker," in *Things That Go Bump in the Night* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1959), pp. 161-184; William A. Wilson, "The Vanishing Hitchhiker

among the Mormons," *Indiana Folklore*, 8:1-2 (1975), 80-99; and Lydia M. Fish, "Jesus on the Thruway: The Vanishing Hitchhiker Strikes Again," *Indiana Folklore*, 9:1 (1976), 5-13.

[6] Collected by Sylvia Grider from Melissa Warner, Feb. 21, 1973, at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. Text in Sylvia Grider, "Dormitory Legend-Telling in Progress: Fall, 1971-Winter, 1973," *Indiana Folklore*, 6:1 (1973), 1-32.

[7] "Herguth's People," *Chicago Daily News*, Wed., Feb. 7, 1973, p. 5. See Richard M. Dorson, *American Folklore* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1959), pp. 253-254, for a brief discussion of this narrative.

[8] *Indiana Folklore* is published by the Indiana University Research Center for Language and Semiotic Studies, Bloomington, Indiana. For information about single-issue purchase and annual subscription rates, write: Secretary-Treasurer of the Hoosier Folklore Society, 504 North Fess Street, Bloomington, Indiana 47401.

[9] In Linda Dégh, "The Runaway Grandmother," *Indiana Folklore*, 1:1 (Fall, 1968), 68-70.

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73, 77.

[11] Cf. Dégh, "The Runaway Grandmother," p. 75.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

[13] In "The Roommate's Death," another popular urban legend, a coed locks her dormitory door from the apparent attack of a lunatic killer, indicated by awful gurgling sounds or halting footsteps outside the door. To her horror, she finds the next morning that she has locked out her assaulted and/or mutilated roommate, now, of course, dead. See Linda Dégh, "The Roommate's Death and Related Dormitory Stories in Formation," *Indiana Folklore*, 2:2 (1969), 55-74.

[14] Dégh, "The Runaway Grandmother," pp. 75-76.

[15] Alan Dundes, "On the Psychology of Legend," in *American Folk Legend: A Symposium*, pp. 34-35.

[16] Consider, for example, the intense public interest in the works of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross: *Death: The Final Stage of Growth* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), and *Questions and Answers on Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan, 1974). A recent issue of *Psychology Today* included "We Are Breaking the Silence About Death" by Daniel Goleman, "The Child Will Always Be There. Real Love Doesn't Die" by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, and "In the Presence of Death. A Determined Fight for Life," *Psychology Today*, 10:4 (Sept., 1976). Increased public attention to the problems of the elderly is similarly reflected in the mass media today.

From the Comics to the Classics: Moving Students into the Study of Literature

GALEN R. BOEHME
OLIVET NAZARENE COLLEGE
KANKAKEE, ILLINOIS

How to move students from a *reading* to a *study* of literature is a problem which puzzles many teachers. Too many young people are in literature courses and yet are not learning about the craft of the writer. They are unaware of an author's development of a theme through the interrelationship of such subordinate elements as character, situation, setting, symbolism, structure, dramatic irony, and point of view. Language arts teachers must learn to develop classroom situations in which students can be led inductively to evaluate the merit of any piece of literature.

To involve students in a critical study of literature, I have used a technique with college freshmen that can effectively be adapted for students of any grade level. In a three-week unit, my major objective is this: to have each student become proficient in describing how an author effectively uses the elements of literature mentioned above to develop an idea. To begin, I have the students turn to the comic section of the daily newspaper and select a comic strip that meets three requirements: it must be three or four frames long, must be self-contained (not part of a continued series), and must be humorous and/or provide a perceptive insight into human nature. Comic strips frequently chosen include "Doonesbury," "Andy Capp," "Archie," Beetle Bailey," and "Blondie."

After the comic strip has been chosen and cut from the newspaper, I then ask that the frames be separated from each other and rearranged, if possible, to form an insight just as humorous and/or as perceptive as the original. In many cases, the frames cannot be effectively rearranged, indicating to the students that a literary principle exists behind each effective comic strip. If the frames can be rearranged, a different insight emerges from the one that the cartoonist originally intended. What artistic elements cause this insight to change?

From this inductive activity, the students decide that the car-

toonist must consider the following points in making his humorous and/or perceptive comment about human nature:

1. **Theme:** Stated explicitly or more frequently implicitly, the theme is the insight about human nature which the cartoonist wants the reader to gain after having examined all the frames of the cartoon. Themes frequently used include these: men and women could communicate more effectively; people are more interested in domestic than moral issues; happiness is the possession of goods rather than the expression of love and compassion.

2. **Character:** Each character may represent himself, a universal character, or a stock character. For instance, Archie in the comic strip of the same name represents the irresponsible high school student; Flo in "Andy Capp" represents the nagging wife. A character's concept of himself as well as of others frequently changes throughout the sequence of the frames.

3. **Plot or Situation:** This is the combination of the circumstances which bring the characters together. In the majority of the cartoons, a conflict arises early in the sequence because two characters of different personalities or ideologies do not view a situation or another character in the same manner. One character might look at the situation more factually whereas the other character might look at the situation more emotionally. If only one character is present, he is usually questioning his relationship with an unseen second party.

4. **Setting:** The background detail given in the various comics varies, with some strips more detailed than others. But in a series of three or four frames, the setting changes, even though slightly, to show the movement of the characters and the development of the theme.

5. **Point of View:** Each character has an attitude toward the subject at hand. The issue is to decide if any of the characters express the cartoonist's point of view or if the cartoonist's viewpoint is implied by the insights which the characters gain but do not state.

6. **Symbol:** The names and the physiques of the characters frequently have symbolic connotations. The name of Mort Walker's character, Beetle Bailey, connotes an insignificant individual whose thoughts have little value or merit. Miss Beezley's unattractive physique in "Archie" implies her servile role as the cafeteria worker.

7. **Structure:** The cartoonist must consider the framework of the cartoon in developing his thought; he is limited to visual images, three or four frames, and a quickly grasped message.

8. **Dramatic Irony:** From the conflict, an insight about someone or about a situation emerges which the reader as well as one or more of the characters do not expect. Of the two characters in conflict, the one who usually voices the ironic comment and who usually has the last speech in the comic strip is the seemingly servile, unintelligent one; this character can effectively manipulate the language to illustrate the "double-entendres" of the situation. The character who gains the insight is the seemingly sophisticated, intelligent individual who first appears as the one who can easily manipulate all aspects of his life.

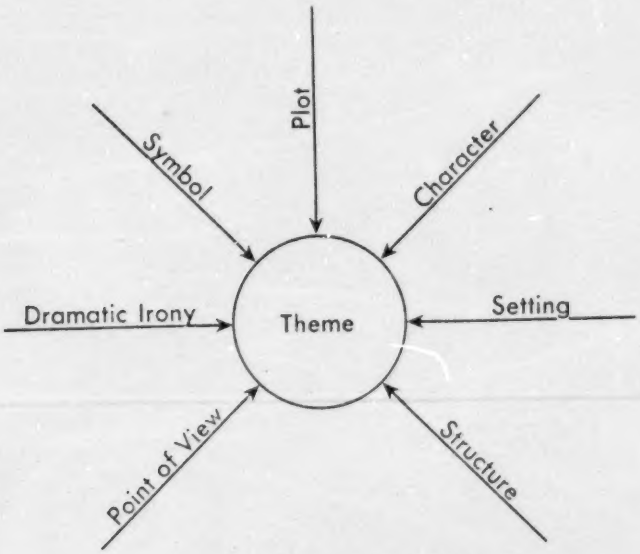

FIGURE 1: The Hub of Critical Literature

Figure 1 is a chart which I call the Hub of Critical Literature. I devised it to illustrate the relationship of the eight literary components which the cartoonist can consider in developing his humorous and/or perceptive point about human nature. The theme is the focal point; the remaining elements, indicated by the spokes, are separate, identifiable entities, but they are nonetheless interrelated in developing the theme. The effectiveness of the theme depends upon the author's skill in using the elements represented by the spokes in developing his literary work. With this scheme in

mind, the students can objectively analyze why they laughed, chuckled, or gained an insight after looking at their chosen comic strips.

The next step is showing the students how the components of the Hub of Critical Literature provide the basis for analyzing the art form behind any literary selection, whether it be drama, poetry, biography, the novel, or the short story. To do this, I stress that analyzing the plot or the conflict of a portrayed situation frequently introduces one to the theme of the work; examining the relationship of the plot to the theme causes one to consider the relationship of the other components of the Hub of Critical Literature to the theme.

To illustrate this thinking, I return to the daily newspaper, having each student find a news story which deals with some kind of conflict concerning a local, state, or national issue. After clipping and studying the article, each student is to write six to eight specific questions which another person could answer after reading the original article. The students are then grouped into pairs and asked to write six common questions which could be asked about either article. The objective here is to have students do generalized thinking about the word "conflict." The specific question, "Why is the price of gasoline higher this week than last week?" becomes this: "What caused the conflict?" Other generalized questions which emerge after groups of two students are put into groups of four students include these: Who caused the conflict? How long has the conflict existed? Why does this conflict merit attention? Who are the individuals involved in this conflict and why are they involved?

After the students have formulated these questions, I then involve them in deciding how each of these generalized questions can be answered. I do this by drawing on the blackboard a five-column chart with each of the following titles acting as a column heading: Present Facts, Historical Facts, Present Values, Traditions, Probable Outcomes or Consequences. When considering the question, "What is the cause of the conflict?", students see that to answer the question they need to consider the present and the historical facts as well as the present and the historical values associated with the issue. They could also consider the probable outcomes and consequences of the issue. The general conclusion reached is this: to answer any of the questions concerning "conflict," one would have to consider the factors in all five headings.

To derive the theme of a comic strip by using questions concerning "conflict," a student could ask such a question as this:

"What is the author or the cartoonist saying about conflict in this situation?" The theme of an "Andy Capp" comic strip might concern the role of a nagging wife in the marriage relationship. What caused the nagging relationship to develop? What are the consequences if Flo continues to nag? As with the word "conflict," the same approach could be used with the concepts of power, people, love, control, and religion — topics frequently developed in pieces of literature.

The stage is now set for a more effective study of literature. The work with the comic strips has introduced the students to the interrelated nature of the elements of the Hub of Critical Literature. The work with the concept of "conflict" has not only taught the students to define "conflict" but also to state a probable theme of a literary work after examining its literary components. I used this approach in teaching the Book of Jonah from the *Bible* to my students. By combining the insights gained from the two previously discussed techniques, the students inductively derived the following points about the Book of Jonah:

1. Two main themes are developed in the book: human and divine love is more important than law and justice; the love of God is universal rather than restricted to one group of people.

2. Jonah as a character matures through the passage of the book, but never does he fully accept the reality of the two themes of the book.

3. The themes are developed ironically. As Jonah tries to flee from God's presence, he unintentionally causes people (the sailors, the Ninevites) to accept God's message; the fish is an instrument of deliverance rather than of destruction; Jonah is more concerned about the death of a plant than about the possible destruction of a group of people.

4. The structure of each of the four chapters is parallel. Each begins with the sailors, Jonah, or the Ninevites facing a crisis situation; each then moves to the response of the protagonist(s), to Yahweh's response, and concludes with a resolving action.

Moving students from the *reading* to the *study* of literature is a challenge. Using the daily newspaper as a tool could give the student an insight into the artistry of significant literature.

Overcoming Student Antipathy to Poetry: A Cure for the Belly-Ache

KITTY LOCKER
TEACHING ASSISTANT IN ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

> "Terence, this is stupid stuff:
> You eat your victuals fast enough;
> There can't be much amiss, 'tis clear
> To see the rate you drink your beer.
> But oh, good Lord, the verse you make,
> It gives a chap the belly-ache."
>
> "Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff . . ."
> A. E. Housman

Most high school and college students feel much the same way about poetry as does the speaker in Housman's poem: reading poetry gives them intellectual indigestion. Required to take some English course, our students will sign up for classes in the short story, or science fiction, or women in literature, or coming of age, or ethnic literatures with some degree of pleasurable anticipation. Classes titled "Introduction to Poetry," however, will have to be cancelled due to insufficient enrollment. Indeed, even when students discover that as part of a survey or a topics course they must read poetry, the groans are scarcely muffled.

The major difficulty in teaching poetry at either the high school or the college level, therefore, is overcoming your students' antipathy to poetry. This article offers day-by-day lesson plans designed to help you do just that. The method outlined in these plans has several advantages:

1. It enables you to introduce concepts and terminology in several areas: rhyme, rhythm, imagery, diction, and tone;
2. It gives students the experience of close reading, thus countering their tendency to skim poetry and then be frustrated because they "don't get anything out of it";
3. It makes students feel confident about their own ability to understand poetry;
4. It's fun!

Ms. Locker is currently completing her doctoral dissertation. In the fall, she will be teaching at Texas A & M as an assistant professor of English.

I've used these lesson plans in freshman-level courses designed for students outside the humanities. You could also use them (perhaps accomplishing more in a given class period) in poetry classes comprised of English majors; with minor modifications, these plans would also be appropriate for use in high school junior or senior units or mini-courses.

Problems with Existing Methods of Introducing Poetry

One of the challenges implicit in teaching a semester-long course or a four-week unit in poetry is to make the course attractive to students who are not English majors and who are not required to take it. At the same time, one is obligated to teach not only the more immediate and enjoyable aspects of poetry such as theme, emotion, and imagery, but also such comparatively esoteric elements as rhythm, structure, tone, diction, and terminology. The difficulty is further compounded by the density of good poems, which may be hard for students to understand and still harder for them to appreciate unless they possess at least a small battery of technical terms and critical approaches.

The traditional approach to this dilemma was simple: spend the first two weeks of the semester on the mechanics of poetry. Teach a crash course in metrics, have students memorize the difference between metonymy and synecdoche, explain the distinction between simile and metaphor. Then, equipped with this technical information, the student will be ready to pursue that elusive quarry, the poem. Even if advances in pedagogy did not cause today's English teacher to abandon such a technique, pragmatism would: confronted with such a dull introduction, most students would simply drop the course and substitute something that looked more interesting.

In the name of interest and relevance, some texts suggest using contemporary "poetry" such as song lyrics to introduce students to poetry. But while the entertainment value of the Beatles' "Let It Be" may be high, many teachers feel that time spent on such verses could be better used in other ways. Furthermore, while such a tactic may keep students in the course long enough for it to "make" the required minimum, the dilemma is only postponed: eventually one must tackle the substance of good poetry in an organized rather than an emotive way.

Fortunately, alternatives to the extremes of these so-called "traditional" and "modern" approaches exist. The approach I offer is based upon a belief and two observations. The terminology of any discipline, I believe, is important not as an end in itself but

because it facilitates communication. The observations are simple and hardly original. First, it is always more interesting to recognize something for oneself than to have it explained by someone else. Second, at their most basic level, both the study of science and the study of poetry share the same basic method: the close observation of phenomena, followed by the interpretation of one's observations. The approach based on these ideas is extremely effective in overcoming the awe, the fear, and the hostility with which students frequently regard poetry.

Day One

Any scientific endeavor begins with an explicit statement of the assumptions on which the work is to be based. You can use an explicit statement of some of your assumptions about poetry and about your students both to begin to break down some of the preconceptions they may have which would interfere with their understanding poetry and to allay some of the fears they will have about the course.

I present the following assumptions; you may of course want to expand or modify this list.

1. It is premature to assert that one does or does not like a poem before one understands it.
2. A literal interpretation of the words which make up a poem is the first step towards understanding.
3. One's understanding of a poem grows with repeated readings.
4. Sound is an important element of poetry.
5. The terminology of any given discipline is important not in itself but because it permits communication.

There are usually smiles and sighs of relief when I announce my assumptions about them as students: I assume that they're intelligent, but that they have little background in literature and little or no background in poetry. Most students — even many students who like to read fiction — feel very unsure of their ability to understand poetry and will welcome your explicit statement that you don't expect them to "know all the answers" yet.

Barriers to the Appreciation of Poetry

You may want to address the questions, Why don't people read poetry any more? Why do so many people dislike poetry? Why are some of them even afraid of it? Here are the points I like to make in response:

1. The basic outlook of our age is literal. Poetry, in contrast, is dualistic: symbolism and figurative language depend upon seeing one thing in terms of another. Actually, of course, our age isn't quite as literal as we sometimes like to believe. Even terms such as "double helix" and "black holes," which now have accepted scientific meanings, were at the moment of their conception analogies, recognitions of correspondences. And the increasing interest in religion suggests that for many people the world of things unseen — which is in part the realm of poetry — is just as important as the world of things seen — the traditional dominion of science.

2. To appreciate poetry, one must read it slowly — word by word. Speed reading and the tendency fostered by visual media such as television to try to perceive the *gestalt* at once only interfere with understanding poetry.

3. Some people think poetry is for "sissies." Perhaps you should tell your students that William Carlos Williams was a doctor and Wallace Stevens was an insurance executive.

Characteristics of Poetry

A discussion of the barriers our society has erected to the appreciation of poetry leads naturally to a discussion of the characteristics of poetry. A class of English majors will probably know enough about poetry to come up with many of the items on the following list themselves, but in most classes you'll need to present these characteristics in a lecture format.

1. Poetry usually looks different on the page. Thomas Lillard's statement, "Poetry is writing that does not go to the edge of the page" is obviously not a complete definition, but it is this characteristic, along with rhyme, that most students outside the humanities do see as the distinguishing marks of poetry.

2. Normal word order is frequently inverted. In part, of course, this is due to the dictates of meter, but such inversions create thematic emphases as well as pleasing sound patterns.

3. Poets use unusual words to fit the rhyme or the meter or the sound or the sense. Therefore, a good dictionary is an indispensable aid to understanding poetry.

4. "Usual" words are often used figuratively.

5. Poetry is made up of patterns — patterns in sound, in structure, in rhythm, in imagery. The poet builds patterns to intensify or focus; he breaks them to surprise and delight the reader or to spotlight a word or an idea.

6. Poetry is nondiscursive rather than discursive. Unlike a news story or a set of directions, whose aims are to convey information

so clearly and exactly that the reader can understand without interjecting his own ideas, good poetry requires the active participation of the reader if meaning is to result. Poetry has been likened to the poles of a carbon arc. When electricity is forced across the distance between the poles, light results. The greater the distance and the resistance, the brighter the light that is finally produced. Good poetry is not easy to understand; our minds must leap the distance between two ideas, perceive the correspondence between dissimilar objects, if understanding is to result. As Thomas Carlyle said, "We are all poets when we read a poem well."

7. The wisdom of poetry is noncumulative rather than cumulative knowledge. The history of science is the story of alchemy and phlogiston and the "ether" surrounding the earth and a hundred other now-discredited theories. The discoveries of science are cumulative: new knowledge replaces old and renders it interesting only as a curiosity. But Sylvia Plath's poem "Lady Lazarus" does not render obsolete Browning's "An Epistle Concerning the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician" or Milton's *Paradise Regained*. In the humanities, and especially in poetry, new insights and new structures add to rather than invalidating the old. One is reminded of Joseph Roux's statement, "Science is for those who learn, poetry for those who know."

Applying 'Scientific' Methods to the Study of Poetry

The differences between science and poetry need not condemn the practitioners of either art to a lifetime of ignorance about the other. Indeed, in this course, you can tell your students, they will apply scientific methods to the study of poetry.

The story is told of a chemistry professor who asked his students, for their first laboratory assignment, to list all the things they could observe about a burning candle. Then, having provided his students with candles and matches, he left the room. Most of the students identified six or ten characteristics and thought the assignment a simple one. They were surprised when the professor returned their lab reports to be told that they had stopped looking too soon: apparently a burning candle has some 60 characteristics.

Your students' first assignment will be to list everything they can observe about a poem (which you can now hand out). Some of the characteristics will be easy to spot; others may be evident only after repeated readings.

The "poem" I give my students is the first stanza of Thomas

Wyatt's "They Flee From Me." On the handout I distribute, the seven lines stand alone, without author, date, or title. I do not tell them that it is only part of a poem; instead, I tell them only to read it through several times, both silently and aloud, and to observe everything they can. I suggest some sample questions to get them started and to indicate the range of responses I want: Who are "they"? How do you know? How many lines does the poem have? Are there any sound patterns?

Day Two

When you ask your students what they have observed about the poem, everyone will have something to contribute. You may wish to go around the room, putting the items on the board to be discussed in detail after all the observations have been recorded, or you may prefer to pursue the implications of each point as it is raised.

Rhyme

Critical terminology can be introduced to supply the names of the elements they note. For instance, one of the first things someone will say is, "It rhymes." You can tell them that rhyming words are designated by letters of the alphabet, a different letter for each rhyming syllable. Give them "a, b" as the sounds for the first two lines, and ask them to apply the scheme to the rest of the stanza. You may want to go a step further and ask *why* the poet made the lines rhyme. Someone may know (or you can tell them) that poetry was originally an oral form, and rhyme (and rhythm) make it easier for the teller to remember the words. But writing has existed for quite some time; yet rhyme persists. Clearly, it must serve some other function. They may suggest that the repetition is pleasing to the ear and to the ego; we like to recognize patterns. When a singer begins a familiar tune, one critic says, our applause is not for the singer but for ourselves for recognizing the song. You will also want to point out that rhyme emphasizes the rhymed words. The reason for this emphasis may not be clear to your students now, but you can return to this point later.

Imagery and Diction

Everyone will have an opinion on the identity of "they"; birds and mice seem to be the candidates most often mentioned. I prefer

at this stage to introduce only the term "imagery," reserving "simile" or "metaphor" (let alone "submerged metaphor") for day 3. You will want to point out that some of the word choices seem incongruous: many of the terms ("flee," "stalking," "tame," "wild," "to take bread at my hand," and "range") clearly suggest animals, but one wouldn't describe an animal's foot as "naked." The implications of word choice are a fruitful field. You will want to note the oddity of the last line, which suggests that perhaps "they" don't know what they're looking for — or that they can't find it.

Rhythm

An effective way to introduce rhythm is to give your students the original first stanza of Wyatt's poem (reprinted at the end of this article) and ask them to compare it with the final version. Show them how to identify stressed and unstressed syllables and ask them to scan the passage. This will be harder for them than it is for you; if you want to go into metrics in any detail on the second day, it would probably be wise to give them both versions the first day. Even a cursory examination, however, will enable them to see that the revised version is *less* regular than the original. This will be a startling discovery; some of them will have tried their hand at writing poetry, and in their experience, the point of revision is often to make the meter *more* regular. Follow up this observation about the poem, as you have done in each previous instance, with "Why?" The first break in the pattern in line 2, for instance, puts greater emphasis on "stalking" and "chamber," sharpening the incongruity of the two words, for what animal hunts in a room? In line 3, the initial anapest emphasizes the *fact* of seeing rather than the singularity of the fact's occurrence. In line 4, the departure from the by-now-established iambic pattern (a pyrrhic foot followed by a trochee, or an anapest followed by defective foot, depending on how one divides the syllables into feet) hurries the rhythm and makes the speaker sound less in control, unsure of himself, bewildered. In line 5, the contiguous accents "thẽy / pút" emphasize the voluntary nature of the act.

Your students may not see one of the most interesting changes until you ask them to count the number of syllables in each line. In the original version, all the lines have either ten or eleven syllables. In the revision, lines 2, 3, 4, and 5 are shortened, so that none of the first six lines has more than ten syllables, while the last line is lengthened to twelve. Perhaps the major effect of this change is to intensify the sense of unease with which the stanza ends, the sense of being caught off balance, the sense of seeking and not

finding. Thus the revisions have brought the sound and sense of the words into very close consonance.

Tone

At this point, if someone has not already mentioned it, you may want to raise the question of tone: how does the speaker feel about his subject? Most students will recognize that the tone includes nostalgia and some bitterness, culminating in a sense of bewilderment. It may be interesting to ask your students whether they think the speaker is male or female. Although there are no definitive clues in the first stanza, those of my students who have been willing to commit themselves have invariably assumed that the speaker is a man.

Summing Up

As the class period draws to a close, ask your students to specify the questions that can't be answered on the basis of the poem as they have it. Who are "they"? Why did they seek him? Why do they now shun him? What change has occurred? What are they seeking now? Then you can confess, "Well, there is more; I didn't give you the whole poem." And pass out another mimeographed sheet with the first *two* stanzas of the poem — still no author or date. Tell them to take the poem home and see if they can now answer those unanswered questions, to list any new observations about the second stanza, and to see if any new questions are raised. Even if the bell has rung, they'll pay you the compliment of skimming the second stanza before they leave. If you have had, as I have, students who think "they" are women, there will be crows of triumph.

As you prepare for day three, you can reflect with pride on what you've accomplished. You've introduced basic concepts and terminology in several areas — rhyme, rhythm, imagery, and tone; you've given your students the experience of close reading, thus countering their tendency to skim poetry and then be frustrated because they "don't get anything out of it." You've interested them: they actually want to read the "whole" poem now; this is detective work, and, somewhat to their surprise, it's fun. But most important, you've made them feel that they can understand poetry, for even the most subtle observations you've made about rhyme or word choice have grown out of phenomena in the poem which *they* noticed. Quintillian believed that it is the teacher's job to

arrange victories for his students; nowhere is this more important than in overcoming the apprehension with which students begin the study of poetry.

Day Three

Your students will come to class confidently: "they" is a woman. There are several directions you can go from this statement, which is in error grammatically and perhaps in other ways as well.

How the Poet Makes Us See

One question to pose is: How much do we know about the woman? Despite the impression of sensuous detail, most of the picture is omitted: the only physical description we are given of her is the phrase "arms long and small." Show your students how much the reader's response depends upon connotations and associations. You may even want to ask them what the poet gains by not describing the woman or the incident more specifically.

If you ask your students to describe the woman, they will use terms from the first stanza. When you introduce the concept of metaphor, you may want to point out that some of the phrases in the first stanza don't seem to fit the woman. If the poet sees her as a predatory creature, it would be apt to picture her "stalking in his chamber," but it seems less likely that she ever would have eaten bread from his hand or that it would have been dangerous for her to do so. Such apparent discrepancies, of course, largely disappear when one is aware of the poem's overtones of courtly love. Nevertheless, it seems to me advisable to pose the question explicitly before providing the answer. Many students will be unaware of any incongruity, and others will be too unsure of their own critical skills to be sure that it inheres in the poem. But at some point in the course, all of your students will have the experience of thinking that the parts of a poem don't fit together. It is important that they not facilely reject such poems as "bad" but rather that they search for a submerged pattern or for a reason for any real or apparent disjunction.

Using the Dictionary

In this case, you can use the submerged metaphor of the poem not only to explain the rules of courtly love but also to stress the importance of using a dictionary to become aware of multiple meanings. Bring the shorter OED to class and have them look up

"danger," "array," "range," and "guise." They'll find that many of these words have military meanings since the language of courtly love appropriated some of the terminology of war. Thus to put oneself in danger was to acknowledge a lord's dominion. "Array" meant not only "clothing" but also "a display of military force" or a "state of special preparation, as for war, festivities, etc." In addition to the still-used sense of to wander in search of food, "range" also specifically meant "to change from one attachment to another; to be inconstant" or to ally oneself with another — meanings which enrich the poem's meaning. And "guise" signified not only "external appearance" but also "assumed appearance; pretence" — the latter a pejorative meaning. The point you will want to make is not simply that words can carry multiple or even contradictory meanings (consider the current "bad") or even that meanings change over time, but, of even more importance to the reader of poetry, that poets frequently use words on more than one level simultaneously, and that, in a good poem, these levels work together to enrich the poem's meaning.

A digression on courtly love will not be out of place if you plan to assign poems using or attacking its conventions later in the course. I've found that students are fascinated by the subject, perhaps because the conventions of dating and courtship have come under conscious scrutiny and attack in our own age.

Shifts from the First Stanza to the Second

A discussion of the basic submerged metaphor is not complete until the heart/hart pun is identified. You might want to ask your students what the poet gains by not making the comparison more explicit; you might also like to point out that some of the details in stanza one ("Busily seeking," for example) seem to suggest a smaller, less dignified animal than a mature stag. Furthermore, your students should recognize some of the shifts between the first and second stanzas: from animals to a woman, from a whole class of creatures to one individual, from the speaker as a presumably superior human to the speaker as a hunted stag. The tone shifts too: the disappointment of stanza one gives way to a positive, dream-like sense of fulfillment. Why so many changes? Macaulay's dictum, "It is not easy to make a simile go on all fours," is perhaps relevant, but it should be clear that a poet who chooses words as carefully and as effectively as the author of this poem obviously has would not make so many shifts simply because

he could not sustain the style and tone for more than seven lines. And the shifts do serve several purposes.

As you suggested the first day of class, it may be argued that the most imaginatively powerful images are precisely those in which the marked disjunction between vehicle and tenor requires the reader to bridge the gap with his own imagination and intellect, thus participating actively in the creation of meaning, not merely receiving it passively. On a less theoretic level, your students will be able to see that the poet is focusing on certain characteristics of animals rather than the animals themselves. The submerged metaphor suggests that the woman shares these characteristics, not that she is an animal. And, of course, by preventing an easy identification of "they," the poet builds suspense and keeps the reader interested.

Perhaps the most important effect of these shifts is to keep the reader off balance by suggesting that the speaker himself has not been able to fit his experience into some prefabricated mold. The apparent opposites between the two stanzas demand resolution. Furthermore, many of the questions which your students realized they could not answer on the basis of the first stanza appear still more urgent but still cannot be answered. What happened to change things between the speaker and the woman? Why did it happen? Whose fault was it? Your students won't be greatly surprised when you tell them, "There's more," and hand them another mimeographed page with (all) three stanzas of the poem.

Day Four

Ask your students if the third stanza changes or maintains the tone and style of stanza two. Since the shift occurs after line 15, it will be less obvious to your students than the shifts from the first stanza to the second. Most students will recognize that the third stanza ends on a different note than the second, though they will need to be guided by your questions to pinpoint the change. Point out that both the syntax of the sentences and the meter reinforce the change. And the sensuous detail of the second stanza gives way to flat statements.

The obsolete spelling of "kindely" and your exercise with the OED on Day 3 may have sent some of them to their desk dictionaries, which won't prove helpful. Bring in the OED again, or tell them what the term means ("in the normal way of the kind," i.e., womankind).

Comparing the Original with the Final Version

I don't take the time on Day 3 to ask my students to compare the original and revised versions of the second stanza. The revisions in the second stanza are effective — the anapests of "from her shoul / der did fall" are almost onomatopoeia echoing the falling garment — but the changes aren't dramatic.

The changes in the third stanza, however, are crucial. In line 20, for example, "unkindly so am served" is replaced by "so kindely am served," which makes the rhythm more awkward (to what purpose?) and the pun on "kindely" more obvious. In line 17, "a bitter fashion of forsaking" becomes "a strange fashion," which moderates the tone and increases the ambiguity of the last line. Even if you haven't had your students scan the entire poem, it will be instructive for them to attempt to scan the last lines of the two versions. The original is easy enough: iambic pentameter (followed by a defective foot, if one makes two syllables of "served"). But how is one to scan the final version? Should it be? —

(a) I fain / would know / what *she* / hath de / served

or

(b) I fain / would know / *what* she / hath de / served?

(Italics added.)

Frequently students who are unsure which of two syllables is accented solve the problem by accenting each in turn, for when they deliberately accent the unstressed syllable, the phrase will sound wrong. But such a method is of no avail here. Nor is the question merely academic, for the meter is related to the meaning of the last line and the whole question of how the speaker feels about the woman and the fact that she now flees from him. Is he chauvinistic? Does he blame her and seek revenge? There is a strong suggestion of this in the original version, a suggestion which is retained in the revision if one scans the last line as (a) above. But if one places the stresses as in (b), the suggestion is reversed. He seems to be blaming not her but himself, to be asking how he should have treated her. Is he implying that she left him because he treated her unkindly and that her desertion of him returns in kind his treatment of her?

Balance and Rest

The notion of a fulcrum is a useful one to show that the poet does not bring the stanza to a decisive resting point. The stanza

pattern and the metrics reinforce the uneasiness. The reader must supply something from his own experience to make the whole balance.

At this point I ask my students, "Do you think I've got another stanza to give you?" It's a risky question. By summarizing the questions which can't be answered definitively at the end of the two previous class periods, I may have suggested that a poet ties everything up neatly at the end of a poem. Furthermore, I'm never sure that my students will see how the "off-balance" ending of the poem differs from the unanswered questions at the end of stanza one or the lack of reconciliation after stanza two. But so far I've been lucky: my students have known the poem is ended.

Before we leave the poem, I like to point out that so many changes are risky, for the reader may not be able to bridge the gap the poet has created. I also think it's useful to ask them to reread the poem as a whole and ask them whether their reaction to stanza one changes when they know what follows. During the rest of the semester, they'll be assigned whole poems, not individual stanzas, and they will undoubtedly finish the poem before they recognize all the implications of the opening lines. They need to realize that rereading provides a double consciousness. One may not be able to reread with pleasure a detective novel one has just finished, but one can reread a good poem. One's pleasure will be augmented, not diminished, for one can observe how the poet manipulates the reader's response even as one responds.

Organizing a Semester Course in Poetry

Now that you have introduced your students to the techniques of close reading and given them a fundamental critical vocabulary on which to build, you can organize the rest of the semester in any way you choose. I divide my reading list into the following units:

Imagery
Sound and Sense
The Sonnet
How Does a Poem Mean?
Poetry and Paraphrase, or, Why Don't Poets Just Come Out and Say What They Mean?
Poetry, Bad Poetry, and Verse
Poets on Love
Poets on Death
Poets on Religion
Poets on Time and Change
Poets on Poetry

The great temptation in setting up your reading list, particularly if you are used to teaching English majors, is to include too much. Now that the first four days have proved to your students that they can understand poetry, they'll want to. Obviously you can't discuss every poem in the detail you've given to "They Flee From Me," but if the rest of the course is reduced to your telling them what a poem means because they can't figure it out in fifty minutes, they'll be bitterly disappointed. And you should do at least one medium-length poem in some detail, or they'll be afraid of anything over a page long. But this too is time-consuming: we spent two and a half periods on "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and barely scratched the surface.

Your reading list should take into account the goals you've established for the course. If your aim is not to prepare your students for upper-level English courses but simply to enable them to read, understand, and appreciate poetry on their own, you'll be more likely to achieve this goal if you have them read forty or fifty poems closely in a semester rather than assigning one hundred poems, all of which are read hurriedly and none of which is understood. With a reading list of ninety or one hundred poems, you'll have to lecture much of the time or your students will be lost. Today's students are diligent; they'll listen attentively, take notes, and spew your words back on exams, but they'll leave the course feeling, as they did when they entered, that poetry is an arcane mystery whose interpretation proceeds by wholly inexplicable rules. Science seems attractive to intelligent students because it seems so accessible: anyone who memorizes chemical valences or the reciprocals of trigonometric functions is well on the way to learning. Students may find chemistry or calculus difficult, but they usually assume that if they apply themselves, they can learn. We need to teach them to make the parallel assumption about poetry.

THEY FLEE FROM ME (Original Version)

They flee from me that sometime did me seek,
With naked foot stalking within my chamber.
Once have I seen them gentle, tame, and meek,
That now are wild, and do not remember
That sometime they have put themselves in danger
To take bread at my hand; and now they range,
Busily seeking in continual change.

Thanked be fortune it hath been otherwise,
Twenty times better; but once especial,
In thin array, after a pleasant guise,
When her loose gown did from her shoulders fall
And she me caught in her arms long and small,
And therewithal so sweetly did me kiss
And softly said, Dear heart, how like you this?

It was no dream, for I lay broad awaking.
But all is turned now, through my gentleness.
Into a bitter fashion of forsaking;
And I have leave to go, of her goodness,
And she also to use newfangleness.
But since that I unkindly so am served,
How like you this? what hath she now deserved?

Student Resistance to Poetry: A Theory

MEG FILES
KANKAKEE, ILLINOIS

Secondary school English teachers often note that students' general reaction to the study of poetry is negative. Teachers, especially if they enjoy poetry themselves, may be puzzled by such a reaction. Why do students dislike poetry? Why do they approach its study with such foregone antagonism? And what can be done to combat this antagonism?

The negative reaction might be explained by looking at Jean Piaget's ideas of the child's intellectual development, and by relating these ideas to the sort of thinking necessary for understanding poetry.

Briefly, Piaget describes the child from age ten to fourteen as on the threshold of the stage of intellectual development of "formal operations." The child is beginning to think in the abstract, to think hypothetically, to consider the inherent though unobservable possibilities in a phenomenon or situation or concept. Before this, the child in the stage of "concrete operations" can physically and mentally manipulate symbols, but he is limited to the information given him and to his actual experience.

Teachers and textbooks generally begin formal analysis of poetry at late elementary school and junior high school levels. Many, or most, children at this level in school are only approaching the period of formal operational thinking. So teachers' expec-

tations that younger students find meaning in poetry often remain unfulfilled.

English teachers often deal with poetry by questioning students about interpretation of lines and words, about "what the poet is saying," about the meaning of the poem. Students often complain that reading poetry in school is an exhausting search for meaning. Reading poetry with understanding involves complex mental operations, and students' complaints may be based on demands in excess of their developing abilities.

First, poetry is by definition dependent on language, and so must deal with symbols which may not be directly representative of anything concrete, that may be abstract. But mental manipulation of abstract symbols is not among the intellectual abilities of the child of the pre-formal operational level of development.

Reading poetry with understanding depends, too, on the ability to understand metaphors. Poetic "things" are often not what they appear, and the ability to find and make sense out of comparisons that are usually implied is necessary. But the ability to locate and understand metaphors in poetry involves solving a mental and abstract problem, and this ability is not among those of the child in the pre-conceptual period.

Juxtaposition of apparently unrelated situations, events, images, etc., in poetry may also be puzzling to a younger student. Understanding poetry involves seeing the relationships, often subtle or implied, and making the connections. The child in the concrete operational period may have difficulty locating and comprehending such juxtaposed relationships.

Thought about poetry must be concerned with concepts. These are the "themes" or "meanings" that teachers want students to seek out. Often this involves locating the pieces of a fragmented idea, juggling them into a coherent whole, paraphrasing the whole in prose form, and finally translating it into a meaningful summary or conclusive statement ("what the poem means"). But Piaget indicates that the ability to deal with concepts, which are abstractions rather than objects that can be seen or manipulated physically, is limited for the child in the preconceptual stage.

Similarly, understanding poetry calls for the mental ability to view two or more images or levels of ideas simultaneously. The denotations and connotations of a word or group of words add layers of meanings to poetry. Analysis of poetry requires the ability not only to separate the levels, but to see them layered up, to look at poems in cross-section. These operations are generally beyond the capabilities of the child before he enters the period of formal operations.

When a child initially confronts poetry, and at times when he confronts particular poems later, he must change established ways of perceiving in order to make sense out of poetry. The peculiar devices of poetry, such as line breaks, unusual word order, and stanzas, may be unfamiliar in appearance or intention. The study of poetry implies a willingness to accept, and to attempt assimilation of, novel perceptions. But the novelty of poetic devices and structure may be beyond the limits of acceptance for younger students, since without the underlying cognitive structure, the child will fail to assimilate new material.

Obviously, these processes are not isolated. Together they integrate to form a system of complex mental operations. When a student tries to understand a poem, he needs to be able to call forth these integrated processes.

When poetry is introduced to students too early, at least through the form of a formal analytical approach, it is either distorted in a way that allows the students to assimilate it and find some, however mistaken, meaning in it, or it is rejected as meaningless. The further result may be a continued misunderstanding or a continued rejection of poetry, even after the student may have developed intellectually enough to understand it.

What can English teachers do to prevent the development in younger students of negative attitudes toward poetry? And how can they approach poetry in class to overcome the negative attitudes that older students have already developed?

Teachers should note that the problems are not really with the poems but with what they ask students to do with the poems. Most younger students are able to deal with poems in some way, or on some level. For example, a child might like a poem because it is pleasing to hear. But this way may not totally satisfy the teacher's expectation of how he or she should deal with poetry.

Piaget offers no prescriptions for teachers; but from his descriptions of children's intellectual development, a few prescriptive conclusions can be drawn. Obviously teachers should not expect students to think in ways that they are not yet capable of. Formal analysis of poetry (for example, analysis of symbols, metaphors or meanings) should not, in general, be emphasized with younger adolescents. Poetry can be enjoyed in other ways (for example, for its humor or for its sound) without in-depth analysis. Most important is that students do not develop an automatically negative attitude toward poetry. Of course, since it is the sequence of periods that is fixed, not the rate of progress, some students may be developmentally ahead of others, and may be ready to deal with poetry in analytical ways. Teachers may be able to work with indi-

vidual students in a more analytical way, but the class should not conclude that this is the way they all should view poetry.

As children cannot be taught to progress from crawling to walking but begin to attempt walking as a function of maturation, so students cannot be taught to progress from the concrete operational period to the formal operational period. But parents can provide an atmosphere in which walking is a desirable practice, and the opportunity to attempt walking without fear of punishment for falling down. So English teachers can provide an atmosphere in which reading and studying poetry is seen by students as an attractive activity and the opportunity to begin interpreting poetry without fear of appearing foolish or wrong. Students in transition between periods should be allowed to enjoy poetry in whatever way they can and should not be made to feel pressured into appreciating poetry in the same ways that the teacher does. Teachers should emphasize that there are no right or absolute answers when looking at poetry; instead, discussions should consider possibilities in poetry. Teachers' attitudes of acceptance must be demonstrated as well as merely verbalized. This implies throwing out the red pencil, both literally and figuratively, when dealing with poetry with young readers.

In addition to providing an accepting atmosphere and positive experiences with poetry, teachers can help students progress by linking new experience with poetry to previous experiences. This might be done by making comparisons (for example, comparing the rhythms of poetry with the rhythms of music). It might be done by a discussion preliminary to reading a particular poem, of students' experiences with the subject of the poem. Generally, approaches to poetry that make it more familiar and less inscrutable should help prevent the building-in of a negative attitude.

Perhaps if suggestions like these were practiced by the teachers of upper elementary and junior high school students, the negative attitude that makes later dealing with poetry unpleasant to many students would never develop. But for teachers of high school students, many of whom have already developed an antipathy for poetry, a few more suggestions may be made.

With students of this age, the problem in dealing with poetry is not, generally, what teachers ask students to do with poetry, as it may be with the younger students. Most students of later high school age could well concentrate on the formal analysis of poetry since most will have progressed into the period of formal operations. But often the damage has already been done, and they respond negatively to poetry from past experience.

Remedial measures to combat the negative feelings may improve students' attitudes toward poetry. As with younger adolescents, an emphasis on the possibilities in poetry, an assurance that there are no right or wrong interpretations of poems (and the practice of this assurance when written or oral feedback is doled out), a demonstrated appreciation for all aspects of poetry, and the relating of the unfamiliar in a poem to the familiar in students' experiences, may all work to reverse some students' negative attitudes.

Another reason, besides the remedial purpose, for dealing with poetry in this way even with older students is that individuals revert briefly back and progress through all of the periods of intellectual development when they confront new material. Knowing that students' dealings with new experience will recapitulate their development might guide teachers in their approach to each new poem, or at least to each new type of poetry. For example, the teacher's questions and discussion stimulation of a new poem might begin with the sort of questions to which the teacher of younger adolescents limits his discussion, before helping students to deal with the poem in a more abstract way.

Given the characteristics of the formal operational period, the older adolescent ought to find poetry especially appealing and assimilable. P. G. Richmond, in his book *An Introduction to Piaget* (N.Y.: Basic Books, Inc., 1971), wrote:

> Formal thought permits the adolescent to examine his own life style and that of the society in which he finds himself, to question and debate the beliefs and values he holds and those he finds around him. Peer group interaction assists this, and the adolescent tests out his thought with his equals. These thoughts are often removed from social reality, being flights of idealistic fancy...

The content of poetry is often an examination of ways of living, a questioning of beliefs and values, and "flights of idealistic fancy"; older adolescents ought to find many connections between poetry and their own thoughts. They ought to find a great deal of meaning in poetry.

It is unfortunate for many students that they may be pressured to deal with poetry in a formal and abstract way before they are intellectually capable of so dealing with it. This pressure may result in the development of a permanent antipathy for poetry. But perhaps, with teachers' practice of suggestions like these, the developed negative attitude might be reversed.

Teaching *Brave New World:* Devil's Advocacy as a Technique

JAMES OBERTINO
PARKLAND COLLEGE
CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS

Brave New World is a novel that probes basic assumptions about the purpose of human life and about the means by which that purpose can best be met by social arrangements. Serious thinking that goes beyond received opinions and prejudices is difficult enough to achieve in the classroom. In the course of several semesters' teaching of *Brave New World,* I have found an adversary approach best suited to awakening students to the questions of values that the novel poses. As a rule, students are ready to condemn most of the characteristics of Huxley's society; by pleading the goodness of the *Brave New World* way in class discussions, the teacher can stimulate students to consider, perhaps for the first time, why they value the things they do. To motivate students into considering their deepest — and hence most unreflectingly held — values calls first for meeting their objections to the society Huxley presents.

Objectives

It seems to me that the teacher's principal objectives in teaching *Brave New World* should be:

1. To lead students to recognize that *Brave New World* embodies and perfects many popular aspirations of Americans today.
2. To help students become aware, as they criticize the novel, that their own values are as culturally determined as those of the citizens in Huxley's society.
3. To encourage students to consider that "freedom" and "happiness," values which they may accept unreflectingly and think they completely understand, are in fact complex and perhaps even at odds.
4. To open for their consideration the problem of the relative merits of an open society versus a closed one.

Strategy and Discussion Questions

All students (and teachers!) are of course afflicted with cultural blindspots. There are certain issues we would rather not consider — issues that are so intimate a part of our value system that we impatiently reject any evidence that suggests that these values may in fact be culturally determined and may not necessarily be universal truths. It is of course a mistake to attempt to engage any class immediately with the most difficult and thought-provoking issues a novel raises. To assure that students do not reject out of hand Huxley's probing of their basic assumptions, a two-pronged teaching strategy should be used. The first part of the strategy provides a lead-in that gently introduces the novel through a consideration of its characters. The first few discussions of *Brave New World* can be spent considering such questions as these:

1. What are the names of the major characters and why are they so strange?
2. Which of these characters endorse their society without qualification and which do not?
3. Why do Bernard, Helmholtz, and John dislike their society, and why do Lenina and Mustapha approve of it?
4. What do "utopia" and "anti-utopia" mean?
5. Why do people write books about societies so different from our own? (This last question is asked partly to prepare students for the realization that in many ways *Brave New World* presents a society not so different from our own after all.)

A few periods of general class discussion of these questions prepare students to consider values. At this point the class may be divided into small groups, each of which is given two questions to discuss (more than one group may be given the same question), and then to report their conclusions to the class at large. The questions are:

1. Are characters in this novel like or unlike people as we know them?
2. Do you like or dislike anyone in the novel? Why?
3. How does this society assure happiness for its citizens?
4. What seems to you to be good or bad about the results that are achieved?
5. What seems to you to be right or wrong about the methods used to achieve the results?

In the consideration of the last two questions, the blackboard can profitably be used to set up a ledger so that opinions about "right"

and "wrong" and "good" and "bad" aspects can be compared. A final question that the teacher can propose to each group, or save for general class discussion, is to ask the students to compare what seems to them to be the "good" and "bad" aspects of Huxley's society with their opinions about the "good" and "bad" aspects of the United States.

It is at this point that the second aspect of the teaching strategy comes into play. Because students may too readily reject the values upon which *Brave New World* society is based, the teacher must be prepared to play devil's advocate (this role may or may not be openly acknowledged) in arguing for the goodness of its social arrangements. One way this argument can be effectively pursued is by contrasting the results of *Brave New World*'s institutions with comparable institutions within the United States. The class will notice that the book shows us a virtually crime-free society in which no one suffers from lack of food or shelter and where very few are ever seriously frustrated, depressed, or lonely. By becoming a persuasive advocate for the *Brave New World* way, the teacher will help to stir students to become aware of what they most value and why and what social costs must be accepted if their values are taken seriously.

From the comparison of the two societies will emerge the observation that many aspects of Huxley's society are nothing more than the elaboration of dominant tendencies within American society. *Brave New World* shows us a consumer-oriented society par excellence; children are inundated with slogans to assure that as adults they will be voracious consumers ("Ending is better than mending"), just as American children and adults are barraged with advertising appeals. The ideal of brotherhood is important in both societies: Americans are taught in their schools, and sometimes in their homes, that all men are equal; *Brave New World* society carries this teaching a step further and instills the idea that "Every one belongs to every one else." The United States is a society of drug users — from coffee to aspirins to sleeping pills, we depend on chemicals to get us through each day and night. When over-the-counter drugs aren't sufficient, we turn to tranquillizers, of which several *billion* are legally consumed each year in the United States. Need we be shocked with the *Brave New World* slogan, "A gramme is better than a damn"? The sexual revolution and the breakdown of the family, aspects of our society present for so long that they are no longer newsworthy, are carried to their conclusion in *Brave New World;* promiscuity is normal and monogamy a perverse deviation, and "mother" and

"father" have become hideous obscenities. *Brave New World* society fulfills the election promises of many an American politician; it provides peace, prosperity, leisure and abundance.

Handling Student Objections

Against the social arrangements of *Brave New World* students are likely to raise two principal objections. One of these is that the people there aren't really happy, either because they "just think they are" or because they have no real emotions. The first assertion involves a fallacy; surely if people think they are happy, they are. What a student who raises this objection may perhaps mean is that what makes people happy in *Brave New World* would not make him happy; perhaps he has come to expect that real satisfactions are scarce and can be reached only by mastering serious difficulties. Students also not uncommonly maintain that happiness cannot be fully appreciated unless there is a large slice of unhappiness set next to it for comparison. This point is interesting and well worth pursuing; for it, as for several other issues raised in this essay, there are no easy or final answers. Students may also contend, as Bernard does, that there are no strong feelings in *Brave New World* society, and to back them up on this point they have the slogan "When the individual feels, the community reels." At this point the teacher may find it valuable to consider whether all feelings are really exiled or merely those that are likely to make one unhappy. It may be also worth noting the various means that are used to curtail emotional dullness, from solidarity services and violent passion surrogate (the biochemical equivalent of rage, but without any of rage's social and personal costs) to soma.

The other objection that students may raise is that people in Huxley's society are not free. Prenatal conditioning and sleep-teaching both limit and direct a person's potential in ways far more obvious and efficient than do family and school in the United States. It may be worth pointing out to students that all their values they have received from sources external to themselves; from a scientific viewpoint every choice they make, while it may be experienced as free, is determined by a web of causes that is ultimately external to themselves. Free will, according to the behavioral sciences, does not exist; there is only the subjective feeling of being free, a feeling, incidentally, that a soft drink company uses to manipulate people into buying their product. In the society of *Brave New World*, as much as in the United States,

or any other society, children must be prepared to fill the roles that society requires to be filled. Socialization in any society teaches people to want to do what they will have to do. From the viewpoint of social efficiency and social harmony, Huxley's society does the job of fitting the individual to his social roles far better than U.S. society, which fills the heads of children with contradictory values. A child may be taught racism at home and brotherhood at school. He may learn at school that anyone can be president; at home he may assimilate attitudes toward learning and work that will prevent his ever finishing high school. Students may continue their argument by asserting that the United States is a land of unlimited opportunity; at this point the teacher may gently point out the curious fact that no Black, Jew, Chicano, or woman has ever been president.

Freedom or Happiness?

The teacher may finally consider the question of whether happiness and freedom, values that receive equal allegiance from many of us, are perhaps at odds. If freedom is the power to achieve individual goals, then citizens of *Brave New World* society are freer than citizens of the United States. To those who riposte that the goals of the people of *Brave New World* are limited by their society, one may ask, whose goals are not limited by his society? A poll of the students' aspirations will reveal that all their goals are derived from social possibilities open to them; even the option to drop out or become a criminal are patterns that already exist.

It would seem that the citizens of *Brave New World* society are happier than Americans, if we define happiness as the absence of fear, anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Even if we, for the purpose of argument, concede that Huxley's citizens are less free, their relative lack of freedom may be the price they pay for greater emotional well-being.

If students insist, as they are likely to, that the inhabitants of *Brave New World* are neither happy nor free, it may be good for them to be given the opportunity to develop, either in small groups or in general class discussion, their own definitions of freedom and happiness. It may finally be that students acknowledge that they want to face challenges on the way to their goals as much as they want the goals themselves, that in effect what they want is not happy times but the pursuit of happiness. But in their pursuit they may find happiness an elusive quarry. Real freedom to pursue happiness involves the risk of madness and misery, two things that

John tells Mustapha the human race cannot do without and remain human. The final confrontation between these two summarizes, but does not exhaust, Huxley's vision of human possibilities.

In conclusion, the teacher of *Brave New World* may wish to point out there is always a conflict between the aspirations of individuals and the necessities that a society, a group of people seeking a common good, imposes. Much of the work that any society demands is just that — work, and not in itself a source of joy. Under pressure from competitors, a society may conscript a portion of its members and require that they risk life and limb to ensure the survival of the corporate being. In the most ordinary circumstances, all highly developed societies deprive individuals of part of their incomes so that projects for the common good may go forward.

Most people at least tacitly acknowledge the right of every society to do these things. *Brave New World* raises the question of where should be the dividing line between the aspirations of individuals and the good of people in general. No one can deny that there is less suffering in Huxley's society than there is in our own. Is the price in social controls worth the result? Should we seek a continuance of the miseries and strife that have characterized human societies thus far or should we use all available technology to create a more perfect harmony in the social order at the cost of individuality as we know it? These are questions that young adults need to consider. With *Brave New World* as a text and the devil's advocate as a teacher, they can be given an excellent opportunity to reassess their values.

Not for Entertainment Only

Donald A. Offermann
Oak Park-River Forest High School
Oak Park, Illinois

Over the proscenium arch of the Royal Theater in Copenhagen is the inscription: EJ BLOT TIL LYST[1] — not for entertainment only. Those words, according to biographer Eva LeGalliene, impressed Ibsen with the potential of drama as a practical force and a powerful influence in human destiny. Under that arch not too many years later, a presentation of Ibsen's "Doll's House" touched off a social movement for human rights that continues to gather strength today.

What Ibsen understood about the power of drama must be reaffirmed about literature in schools today because the study of literature is more than a frill and should be considered one of the BASICS in any curriculum design. The increased dedication of educators to prepare students for the act of reading is encouraging; the task that remains is to foster student interest in reading literature. Virginia Reid, former president of the National Council of Teachers of English, said in Minneapolis in 1972: "Some of us are concerned that the effort has been doubled to increase the skill, whereas the desire to read has been, in many cases, overlooked."[2] I believe that desire can come, in part at least, from the awareness that reading imaginative writing can serve a practical purpose in the life of a human being.

What can the reading of literature do for a human being? Consider these possibilities:

1. It can be a means of exploring with impunity a host of philosophies, professions, and life styles.
2. It can increase the sensitivity of the reader to the world outside self — to other people and the natural environment.
3. It can lead to moral responsibility and decency.
4. It can engender a stability that knows how to cope with distress and how to savor ecstasy.

But is the reading of literature a powerful enough experience to affect life style, sensitivity, morality, and psychological stability? Consider this for a moment: Would minorities be concerned about their image in a work of literature if they were not convinced of the power of literature to shape racial attitudes? Would women be concerned about their image in a work of literature if they were not convinced of the power of literature to shape attitudes toward women? Would censors be concerned about prurient appeals in a work of literature if they were not convinced of the power of literature to shape sexual attitudes?

Now it might appear that only readers with advanced skills could handle the literature containing the kinds of experiences necessary to shape attitudes and offer psychological support. Yet, the simplest of literature requiring a minimum of reading skills can teach some important lessons. Northrop Frey[3] introduces the subject of WISH AND NIGHTMARE with four very simple rhyming verses from children's games; one of these is the simple:

Ring around the rosie
A pocket full of posies
Ashes, ashes,
We all fall down.

Not really a challenge from a skills standpoint, but it nevertheless is such a clear statement of grandeur and destruction: a child's day in a beautiful garden (perhaps symbolical of youth) is destined to give way to a real world that is harsher; the child will lose innocence and move into the world of experience.

But beyond these obvious functions of literature, I believe that the study of literature can serve to develop and enlighten the imaginative capacity in a human being. The world of arts, including literature, is probably not so much concerned with capturing the real world as it is with creating a world that can be imagined. Even the literature of the anti-hero points to the nonexisting world where the positive form of the hero can be found. I think, for example, that the imagination rather handily constructs a new environmental order for a Holden Caulfield, an order in which the destroying influences of the world depicted in Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* are replaced by their opposites, and the personal flaws of Holden disappear as the mind imagines a hero the opposite of Holden, someone who has it all together, rather than a broken-down teenager. And as fascinating as the anti-hero Holden may be, I think the larger fascination rests with the creative speculation on how he might have been had he experienced a different world. And it is just this kind of speculation that fires the world with hope, with creative energy for positive change.

Much of the school experience involves abstractions of one sort or another. BTU, RPM, H_2O, ERG, X, and Y typify schoolwork. Yet, I can't see a BTU; I can't see an RPM. But I can experience the terror in a sweep of forest fire generating millions of BTU's when creative imagination makes it come alive in literature; I can sense the dizzying and thrilling experience of RPM when creative imagination concretizes that drive behind a speeding racing car throwing me through a figure-8 track.

This very concretizing of imagined events in literature has proved of inestimable practical value to science itself. In a biographical essay titled "Mr. Imagination," George Kent celebrates the contribution to science made by the writer Jules Verne:

> Though he never had a test tube in his hand, Jules Verne became a stimulus and inspiration to the scientist in the laboratory. He had TV working before simple radio had been invented: he called it phonotelephoto. He had helicopters a half century before the Wright brothers, dirigibles before Zeppelin. There were, in fact, few twentieth century wonders that this man of the victorian era did not forsee: neon lights, moving sidewalks, air conditioning, skyscrapers, guided missiles, tanks, electrically operated submarines, airplanes.
>
> Those who later were inspired by him gladly gave him credit. Admiral

Byrd, returning from his flight across the North Pole, said Jules Verne had been his guide. Simon Lake, father of the modern submarine, wrote in his autobiography: "Jules Verne was the director general of my life." LaCierva, inventor of the autogiro (now the helicopter), acknowledged his debt to the author, as did George Claude, creator of the neon lamp. August Piccard, balloonist and deep sea explorer, Marconi, of wireless fame — these and many others agree that Jules Verne was the man who started them thinking. France's famous Marshall Lyautey once told the Chamber of Commerce of Deputies in Paris that modern science was simply a process of working out in practice what Jules Verne had envisioned in words. Verne, who lived to see many of his fancies come true, was matter-of-fact about it all. "What one man can imagine," he said, "another man can do."[4]

Northrop Frey has said that the goal of the study of literature is "the inner possession of literature as an imaginative force"[5] and this possession involves a transfer of imaginative energy from literature to ourselves. Jules Verne's literature transferred an imaginative energy to many scientists who made reality what Verne had envisioned. If Verne's literature had such an effect on inventors and scientists, I think that literature in general can have the same kind of effect on personal life style, on goals, and on personal strength. Is the experience of literature an idle trip of the imagination — purely fanciful and merely for fun, escape, or is it NOT FOR ENTERTAINMENT ONLY as the inscription in the Royal Theater claims?

Frey also sees that literature performs a function in our everyday lives, a function that ritual carried out in primitive societies:

> Rituals are pre-verbal actions; literature is the verbal form of man's quest for identity, his never-ending effort to humanize the world, to complete the portrait of the person he wants to become and of the society he wants to live in. Man today, just like man of long ago, uses his imagination to try to control the universe, rather than have it control him. He wants — we all want — to create the truly human society, a society that combines the power of nature and the potential of man. These are man's goals, the discoveries he makes as he seeks to fulfill them are the meanings of his life. The achievement of these goals demands the full and final uses of the imagination.[6]

If literature does indeed replace ritual in our 'verbal' society, then it is providing a function, one that must be carried out. Without it, a person will not be complete.

The human mind takes many different tacks in its attempt to comprehend the world and the universe, but of these tacks, two appear to be used most frequently. They are JUDGMENT and WIT. In the exercise of judgment, the mind seeks contrasts through which categories are established; in the exercise of wit, the mind seeks similarities to establish connections. Judgment

separates chaos into discernible parts while wit connects the parts into an understandable whole. Judgment is a function of science; wit is a function of art. And while scientific separation is an important step in the comprehension or reality, by itself it produces a sense of aloneness, the frustration of identity. But wit takes the comprehendible parts and seeks to connect them with each other, to connect human beings with the cosmos in a way that reduces the sense of aloneness. It is quite a different thing, this being ONE, from being ONE WITH THE UNIVERSE. What the Greek mind did in separating CHAOS into Gaea and Uranus and further sub-dividing these parts into all of the forms they could call separate identities in their world was an important phase in their comprehension of that world. But it didn't take the Greek mind long to take the step of wit through a process of metamorphosis to see form-changes as a way of affirming connections of identities and of the Greeks with their world. When they looked at the laurel tree and understood it as the changed Daphne or looked at the constellation of Orion and thought of it as the hunter that once roamed the Grecian woods, they felt a comfortable connection with earth and heaven. The Roman poet Ovid was so impressed with the theme of metamorphosis in Greek mythology that he titled his book about it *Metamorphosis*.

Now we should ask the question, "Where in our schools do we encourage students to exercise wit?" I think the most significant area is in the study of literature. The poetic mind seeks connections (remember Frost's definition, "A poem is a connection of two things in the universe") and the poet's use of metaphor is surely a vestigial expression of the ancient Greek metamorphosis. Shelley regarded poetry "At once the center and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred." Whitman's whole poetic commitment is this connection of identities, as evidenced in his poem "On the Beach at Night Alone," a part of which I quote here:

A vast similitude interlocks all,
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets,
All distances of place however wide,
All distances of time, all inanimate forms,
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different, or in different worlds,
All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes, the fishes, the brutes,
All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages,
All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe, or any globe
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose them.

To complete this argument, I think it is fair to say that the exercise of wit is a psychological necessity and that an education that omits it is not fulfilling a basic human need. Since the experience of literature is an exercise of wit, this experience should be included as one of the indispensable basics in a school curriculum.

Our inner emotional world too is affected by the experience of literature. All of us have those moments when the faint glimmerings of a powerful emotion begin to stir within us only to be snuffed because we cannot internally organize the constituents of that emotion or find words to express it. And then, some time later, we read the words of some good writer that revitalized the snuffed emotion, gave it a verbal shape, and allowed us the full experience of an emotion that had died on a threshold earlier. Freud said, "Literature can illuminate repressed wishes." I think that statement can be fairly extended to say that literature can illuminate repressed emotions that were waiting to be organized by the suggestion of the sensitive genius of a writer. Alexander Pope said it this way in his "Essay on Criticism":

> True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd
> What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd:

Our schools can be satisfied to train students to perform tasks in life. They can train students to read, to compute with simple and complex mathematical operations, and to train them in social and economic responsibility. I believe this kind of training is necessary and in some respects has been neglected in American schools. But I also believe that American schools have an obligation to go beyond *training* to *educating* students. If our schools are satisfied merely to train, then instruction in reading can and should stop on the skills level and should be carried out with factual prose. But if our schools are dedicated to *educating* students, then instruction in reading must include literature, for the study of literature is an exercise of a very important dimension of knowledge: concrete thinking. In literature, *idea* (an abstraction) must always remain subordinate to the concrete event, the narrative, in which the idea is evidenced. Through literature, schools can encourage a non-utilitarian contemplation of the world for its own sake.

The vision of education for Americans must be larger than preparation for specialized functions in society. Democracy simply cannot exist where a noncommunity of specialists incapable of conversing with each other is charged with the responsibility of government "by the people." "Specialization," Robert Maynard Hutchins said, "makes it harder to carry on any kind of conver-

sation; but it calls for a greater effort, not the abandonment of the attempt." Hutchins sees that "greater effort" being exercised in an increased commitment of schools to the study of great books. "Imagine," he said, "the younger generation studying great books and learning the liberal arts. Imagine an adult population continuing to turn to the same source of strength, inspiration, and communication. We could talk to one another then. We should even be better specialists than we are today because we could understand the history of our specialty and its relation to others. We would be better citizens and better men."[7]

Gilbert Highet, in his conclusion to *The Classical Tradition*, made the following statement about the function of literature:

> We live in a materialistic world. Most of us think incessantly about making money, or about gaining power — expressed in material terms — for one group or one nation, or about redistributing wealth between classes, countries, or continents. Nevertheless, civilization is not chiefly concerned with money, or power, or possessions. It is concerned with the human mind. The richest state in the world, or a world-society of unlimited wealth and comfort, even although every single one of its members had all the food and clothing and machines and material possessions he could possibly use, would still not be a civilization. It would be what Plato called "a city of Swine," eating, drinking, mating, and sleeping until they died.
>
> The Greeks were keen businessmen. The Romans built a vast empire of tremendous power and wealth. But if they had done no more than that, they would be as dead as the Assyrians. They are still alive, and working through us, because they realized that civilization means education. Civilization is the life of the mind. Naturally it cannot exist without material security, physical health, and properly distributed wealth. But these are not ends. They are means. Their ultimate objective is the good life of the mind. It is through the mind that we are truly human. The rest, the games and the food and the shelter and the fighting, we share with the animals.
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> Civilization means education — not only for children but for men and women throughout their lives. One of the most varied and interesting methods of such education is literature. Greece knew that dramas and songs, tales and histories, are not only amusements for a moment but, because of their continuously fertile content, permanent possessions for the mind. This was the discovery of the Greeks. They were not very rich or powerful. Egypt was richer. Persia was far more powerful. But the Greeks were civilized, because they *thought*.[8]

Highet goes on to state that the relationship between Rome and Greece is one that parallels the relationship between the modern world and the classical tradition — that it is an educational relationship, that classical tradition does not perpetuate the memory of the powerful and the luxurious but rather "only thought and art live."[9]

What began as a statement of the BEYOND ENTERTAINMENT value of literature seems to have turned into a plea for continued use of literature in schools. I feel that use is in some ways threatened by the BASIC SKILLS emphasis, especially when the definition of BASIC is very narrow. Marketable skills, saleable skills and narrowly conceived reading programs smack of TRAINING according to a materialistic and economic, almost a GNP bias, and I worry about EDUCATION and I ask, where is the soul? Literature is one of the BASICS in a program that EDUCATES as well as trains, and it should be a very effective part of it, for while literature is not for entertainment *only*, it is for entertainment and should therefore be a very engaging part of the curriculum.

NOTES

[1] Eva LeGalliene, *Six Plays by Henrik Ibsen* (New York: The Modern Library, 1953), p. xiii.

[2] Virginia M. Reid, "Reading and the Right to Read," *Convention Concerns* (Urbana: NCTE, 1972).

[3] Northrop Frey, ed., *Man the Myth-Maker* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1973), p. 302.

[4] George Kent, "Mr. Imagination," *Saturday Review*, June 5, 1954.

[5] Northrop Frey, p. 302.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Robert Maynard Hutchins, "The Disappearance of Liberal Education," in *Great Books of the Western World*, Vol. I (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), pp. 30-31.

[8] Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 547-548.

[9] *Ibid.*

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